

The RSC Corner

by Ron Korcak, Chair, RSC

We're getting closer! At the May quarterly meeting of the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) we received another update on the status of the Radiation Safety Management System (RSMS) from Katina Jones. Data was migrated to the new RSMS platform on May 2 and members of the RSC as well as the RSS were provided access to the web site in order to continue to debug the system. This will also help to assure that the proper information is in a logical format and what the user needs is available.

The RSC members were granted access to the new system at the May quarterly meeting. The goal is to debug and beta test the system as much as possible before releasing to the user community. The system should be released to the user community this fall. The RSS is also working on a user guidelines document to assist the user community with the new software.

If you have a portable gauge you should, by now, be aware of the new required security arrangements. This is essentially 'two levels of locking' for security. If you have not heard from RSS please contact them as soon as possible.

The annual LRPO training session in College Station, Texas was held in early June. Progress was made on pro-

viding more on-line training. The RSS is working on a pre-approval process that will be tied into the new RSMS.

The Radiation Safety Committee has some new members. Drs. John McMurtry and Anthony Capuco are the new member and alternate, respectively, as Technical Representatives for Animal Research. They replace Dr. David Smith who was a long-term, proactive member of the RSC. Also, Dr. David Baer accepted the position as alternate for the Technical Representative for Human Studies. Lastly, Mr. James Terry, RSS Health Physicist, received approval from the RSC for independent review of permits for use of unsealed radioactive materials and irradiators and for independent inspection of locations where these radiation source types are used. We know that James will be an excellent addition to the RSS staff!

If you have any comments or questions or would like to see an issue or concern covered in the RadChronicle, please feel free to e-mail me at KorcakR@ba.ars.usda.gov.

Revised Mailing Schedule

Due to the migration to the new RSMS system, all mailings that were scheduled for July will be sent in August. This includes leak tests, lab surveys, irradiator surveys, and the

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On-line Training Update

The USDA's Radiation Safety Staff has developed a set of on-line training courses, including Basic Radiation Safety, Radiation Safety Awareness, and Electronic Capture Detector Radiation Safety. These are available at no cost to USDA employees. To register for a course, go to www.usda.radtrainonline.com and complete the registration form. After review by the RSS, you will be notified when your account is set up and available. After completing a course, RSS will send you a certificate of training through the mail (as well as a pdf copy).

The Basic Radiation Safety course is a 4-hour fundamentals course that provides an excellent overview of our radiation safety program requirements. It can be used for initial training or for refresher training for unsealed radioisotope users.

The Radiation Safety Awareness course is aimed at ancillary staff, but is also good for x-ray system users.

The ECD Radiation Safety course satisfies the general training requirements for ECD permit holders and serves as a source of refresher training as well.

RSS is planning to expand the course offerings to include gauge refresher training, irradiator refresher training, and a general USDA radiation safety program in the next year.

PERMIT HOLDERS

Are You Planning to Retire in the Near Future?

What will become of your radioactive material, x-ray equipment, and permit? Under the RSS tracking and surveillance system, radioactive material and x-ray equipment must be listed on a permit, and must be associated with the permit holder's name.

If our office is not given the name of a new permit holder candidate, or the name of another permit holder to take over, then we must keep the retired person's permit active in our system. This, of course, causes a lot of frustration for everyone. In such cases, your former co-workers or management would be obligated to improvise a relationship with our office as your proxy permit holder until the disposition of the radioactive material and x-ray equipment can be worked out.

This is something to think about for any permit holder who is considering retirement. It is a good idea to line-up a new permit holder candidate as part of your retirement plan so that person can submit a new permit application to our office as soon as possible, after the permit holder decides to retire. The new permit holder often turns out to be one of the associate users listed on the permit or someone working in a location safety office.

NRC License Being Renewed

Streamlined Process and More Flexibility

The RSS is preparing an application to renew the licenses issued to USDA for use of radioactive materials. USDA is required to apply for renewal of its two licenses (19-00915-03 and 19-00915-06; which will expire on September 30, 2005) by August 31, 2005. The use of radioactive materials in USDA will not be affected if NRC receives the applications by this date – radioactive material can still be purchased and used as long as a renewal application has been accepted by the NRC. If a radioisotope vendor or source manufacturer is uncertain about sending material to you because of the apparent expiration of the USDA licenses, please direct them to the RSS and we will ensure that they receive information needed to complete your order.

The license applications and any modifications required by NRC during the review process serve as the basis for the USDA radiation safety program. The commitments we make in the application become requirements when it is approved by the NRC. The USDA Radiation Safety Handbook and other guidance documents issued by the RSS and the USDA Radiation Safety Committee translates the license commitments into procedures for use by USDA employees that will ensure compliance with the licenses.

New NRC program guidance streamlines the license application process by allowing applicants to commit to using

model operating procedures developed by NRC rather than submitting our own procedures and working with NRC to ensure they meet their guidance. Use of these model procedures, although not significantly different than procedures we already use, will improve the USDA radiation safety program. Also, the NRC has made it possible to make minor changes to our procedures without getting NRC approval as long as the USDA Radiation Safety Committee reviews and approves the changes and ensures that they will not diminish the radiation safety program. We expect that the new licenses will incorporate a few technical and administrative requirements and we will notify you of how best to implement any new requirements. The new licenses will likely be issued in early 2006.

Revised Mailing Schedule

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x-ray audit. The format of your reports will also change. The initial format will not resemble the reports you've received in the past. Although we have shifted the time interval slightly, your submission of all documents sent to you is still required to maintain compliance.

We appreciate your patience during this transition. If you have any questions, please contact Katina Jones at 301-504-2444 or kjones@rss.usda.gov.

NRC Increases Portable Gauge Security Requirements

**New Rules Effective
July 11, 2005**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission amended its regulations (effective July 11, 2005) for portable gauges containing radioactive material to require two independent physical controls to secure the gauges against theft or access by non-authorized employees. NRC will require two independent physical controls for these gauges when they are not under your control and constant surveillance. An example of acceptable storage in a building includes securing the gauge in a locked storage container (closet or cabinet) within a locked room (regardless of the level of security applied to the building, such as manned, guard stations, card readers, phone-in access.) Examples of acceptable storage in unattended vehicles include placing the gauge inside a locked van and securing it to the vehicle with a steel cable and lock; placing the gauge in a pickup truck bed inside a locked, non-removable box and further securing the box with a steel cable and lock; or keeping the gauge inside the locked cab of the pickup truck and securing the gauge to the vehicle with a steel cable and lock.

Although theft or loss of portable gauges within USDA is rare (it has happened once in the past 13 years), the NRC reports that 50 gauges are stolen nationwide each year and only half are recovered. The NRC believes these new

requirements will make it more difficult to steal gauges and reduce the risk of accidental exposures or intentional misuse of the radioactive material.

The RSS asked all USDA portable gauge users to describe their security procedures and reviewed their procedures for compliance with the new rules. Many gauge users had independently upgraded their procedures to comply with the new rules and RSS worked with the rest of the gauge users to bring them into compliance.

Although the changes did not appear to be too burdensome, we appreciate the cooperation and effort by all gauge users to comply with the new rule. If you have any questions about the rule, please contact the Radiation Safety Staff.

Attention All Individuals Interested in Gauge Training

The Radiation Safety Staff will be presenting its Nuclear Gauge Train-the-Trainer course December 6-8, 2005 at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. If you are interested in attending this training, complete the registration form and fax it to RSS at 301-504-2450. The deadline for registration is November 1, 2005.

For more information and to access the registration form, visit the RSS website, www.rss.usda.gov and open the Training Schedule page or contact Jack Patterson at 301-504-2445 if you have any questions.



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